

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Minuteman Road Upgrade
Proposed Implementation Date:	January, 2014
Proponent:	Minuteman Exploration, LLC
Location:	Sec 8, T13N, R15E
County:	Judith Basin County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has requested a Land Use License (LUL) to improve the existing north – south, 2-track trail on State Land (Sec 8, T13N, R15E, W2W2). The upgrade is necessary to provide an all season road for heavy duty trucks and drilling equipment to access a proposed oil well drilling site located on deeded land in Sec 5, T13N, R15E.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Northeastern Land Office (NELO), Minuteman Exploration, LLC, Montana Board of Oil and Gas, and Stevenson's Diamond Dot Inc, (surface lessee, Lease #3998) are all involved with this project.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

The DNRC NELO has jurisdiction over this proposed project.

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does not grant a Land Use License (LUL) to improve the existing north – south, 2-track trail on State Land (Sec 8, T13N, R15E W2W2).

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does grant a Land Use License (LUL) to improve the existing north – south, 2-track trail on State Land (Sec 8, T13N, R15E W2W2).

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The soils on this site are mostly Silty. There are some steep areas (Thin Hilly range site) that are traversed by the existing road. The proponent does not intend to change the existing road location. Special Stipulations will address any changes to the existing route.

There are no fragile, compactable or unstable soils in the proposed project area. There are no unusual geologic features, or any special reclamation considerations.

No cumulative effects to the soils are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

No important groundwater resources will be impacted by the proposed project.

No cumulative effects to the water resources are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The air quality in the area will not be affected.

No cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The proposed project improves an existing two track trail. The area of disturbance will be relatively small and is expected to revegetate naturally.

Special Stipulations will address the proponent's responsibilities for reseeding (if needed) and weed control.

No rare plants or cover types are present.

No long term cumulative effects to vegetation are anticipated.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The proposed action will not have any negative effect on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program indicates that there are 2 fish Species of Concern that may occur in the area of the proposed project. The proposed project will not impact any surface water resources.

A review of the 2013 ArcGis Greater Sage-grouse Lek data indicates that there are no leks in or near the project area.

There are no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources on this site.

No cumulative effects to habitat are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The proposed project will improve an existing two track trail. There are no known historical, archeological, or paleontological resources within the project area.

The proponent will be required to notify DNRC immediately if any new historical, archeological or paleontological resources are discovered.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

No direct or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No demands on limited resources are required for this project.

No direct or cumulative effects to environmental resources are anticipated.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed in this EA Checklist.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

There will be some health and safety concerns associated with the operation of heavy equipment. The proponent and their employees are aware of any health and safety hazards and accept them as occupational hazards.

Once the roadwork has been completed, there will be no health and safety concerns associated with this project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

This project will not add to or deter from other industrial, agricultural, or commercial activities in this area.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The project will not create any new jobs. These positions are already held by employees of the proponent. No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

This project will not affect the tax base or tax revenues.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There will not be any increases in traffic or traffic patterns if this project is approved.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting this project.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

There are no wildernesses or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. There will be no negative effects on the limited recreational potential on this tract as a result of the proposed project.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness activities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposed project does not include any changes to housing or developments. Population and housing will not be effected.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed project will have no effect on any unique quality of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The Land Use License (LUL) for this project will generate \$425 initially. The LUL will generate an additional \$400/year for each year the proponent renews the LUL.

**EA Checklist
Prepared By:**

Name: Bill Creamer
Title: Land Use Specialist

Signature: /s/ Bill Creamer

Date: December 31, 2013

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Alternative B, and recommend the proponent be granted a Land Use License (LUL) to improve the existing north – south, 2-track trail on State Land (Sec 8, T13N, R15E W2W2).

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no negative long-term environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Barney D. Smith
	Title: Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature: /s/ Barney D. Smith	
Date: December 31, 2013	